

# Niagara Region Indigenous Updates

2025



Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. These lands are steeped in the rich history of the First Nations such as the Hattiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today. The Regional Municipality of Niagara stands with all Indigenous peoples past and present in promoting the wise stewardship of the lands on which we live.



Members from the local Indigenous community share their lived experience during Niagara Region events. Marie Louise carries the No More Stolen Sisters flag as part of the Red Dress Day flag ceremony and unity walk.

## Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan (2026-2030)

The Niagara Region **Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan** (the Plan) is ready. The Plan spans five years (2026 to 2030) and has three main areas: Relationship Building, Education, and Service Delivery. Local Indigenous leaders and community members helped with its creation. The Plan was based on two Indigenous Community reports including *Creating Our Way Forward* (Davis, 2019) and *Mno Bmaadziwin: Living the Good and Healthy Life* (Sturgeon, 2021). These plans are available on [niagararegion.ca](https://niagararegion.ca).

## Community Leaders Come Together

Following the recommendations from the *Mno Bmaadziwin Report*, a working group of community leaders was created. The working group is called the **Joint Roundtable**. It includes leaders from local Indigenous community agencies, Niagara Region, and Niagara Region Police Service. It helps balance decision-making when responding to the needs of the Indigenous community.

The Joint Roundtable includes representation from the following Indigenous organizations:

- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC)
- Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle (IDHC)
- Niagara Peninsula Area Aboriginal Management Board (NPAAMB)
- Niagara Chapter Native Women (NCNW)
- Niagara Region Métis Council (NRMCM)
- Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC)

## Indigenous Relations

Niagara Region has two permanent Indigenous Relations positions. Both have been filled by members of the local Indigenous community. These roles were created in response to recommendations from the **Creating Our Way Forward** report. They help ensure Indigenous voices are part of Niagara Region planning, policy development, and service delivery.



Indigenous Relations staff members, Chantelle Berry (Indigenous Health Specialist), Brian Kon (Indigenous Relations Specialist) and Cassie Oggunniyi (Manager, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Indigenous Relations) stand in front of creation by Leona Skye-Grandmond.

## **Chantelle Berry – Indigenous Health Specialist**

Chantelle is Turtle clan from Six Nations. She grew up in Niagara. Chantelle has worked alongside the Indigenous community in Niagara and Hamilton for over 20 years. She champions and inspires change, reconciliation and resilience.

Before Niagara Region, Chantelle managed an Indigenous Housing First Program in Hamilton with De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre. She led her team to receive the “Transformative Change Award” through the Alliance for Healthier Communities. Chantelle was a key part in the first Indigenous Alternative Secondary School Program. A partnership between the Niagara Regional Native Centre and the Niagara District Catholic School Board.

At Niagara Region, Chantelle provides guidance to Public Health and Emergency Medical Services. She co-led the creation of the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan. Through her community connections, she brings Indigenous voices forward and culturally supportive services to Indigenous communities where needed.

## **Brian Kon -- Indigenous Relations Specialist**

Brian was born and raised in the Métis homeland of the Red River settlement. He and his family moved to Niagara 30 years ago. Brian is a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario. He is an active, proud member of the larger Indigenous community.

Brian joined Niagara Region in 2023. A natural storyteller, Brian shares the history, culture and lived experiences of the first people of Turtle Island with Niagara Region staff. His goal is to ensure Indigenous voices from the local community are heard and were included in the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan.

Brian provides guidance to all Niagara Region departments. He shares his passion of Indigenous history and truth through developing training and resources for all staff. Brian is committed to providing Niagara Region programs and services that are culturally respectful and meet the needs in community.

In 2024/2025 Niagara Region **partnered with NPAAMB** to hire an Indigenous student intern. Jesse Smith joined the Region for a six-month contract to support and develop educational resources at the Region. Jesse helped facilitate community engagement for the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan. They wrote articles to promote key Indigenous dates and events. These posts were shared through the Niagara Region staff newsletter.

## Highlights From 2025

Each year Niagara Region promotes local Indigenous community events. Encouraging attendance at these events helps to build awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, and current realities.

Niagara Region honoured **Indigenous Veterans Day** by lowering all flags on November 8. Additionally, the Region hosted four flag ceremonies in 2025, including:

- **May 5** – Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit
- **June 2** – Pride and Two Spirit
- **Sept 29** – Orange Shirt Day
- **Nov 24** – 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

Indigenous community members shared how these events have impacted their lives or the lives in their community.

Niagara Region staff are encouraged to experience Indigenous culture and traditions first-hand. It helps build respectful relationships between Niagara Region staff and Indigenous community members.

Niagara Region promoted three local Pow Wows in 2025:

- **Jan 17** – Brock University
- **Mar 8** – Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
- **Oct 25** – Niagara Regional Native Centre

We want to know about other events happening throughout the year. Please email **[Indigenous.Engagement@niagararegion.ca](mailto:Indigenous.Engagement@niagararegion.ca)** with details about your upcoming community events and celebrations.



Significant dates are acknowledged with flag ceremonies at Niagara Region Headquarters. These events create awareness of issues that impact the Indigenous community. Invited members from community share their lived experiences.

## Staff Training and Cultural Resources

Niagara Region offers Indigenous cultural learning opportunities for all staff. This includes training videos, resource materials and guest speakers. These resources inform staff about Indigenous history, culture and the impacts of colonization on Indigenous people.

In 2025, Niagara Region introduced mandatory cultural training for all staff. The one-hour e-module focused on **Indigenous-Colonial Relations**. By end of year, over 2,400 staff had completed the training. Emergency Services, Long-Term Care, and leadership teams will receive program specific training. Public Health provided training on Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP). This relates to data collection, governance, and sovereignty.



Dr. Niigaan Sinclair spoke to Niagara Region staff in September 2025. He spoke about the current state of the 94 Calls to Action.

Education is also provided through local Indigenous speakers who share their lived experiences. These sessions are available for staff to attend in-person or watch online. Some sessions are recorded to accommodate staff schedules. For **Orange Shirt Day 2025**, Dr.

Niigaan Sinclair presented to Niagara Region staff. He shared what reconciliation looks like today. Later that day, Dr. Sinclair presented to community members during the Region's community engagement event held at the Meridian Centre in Pelham.

## Improving Access to Regional Services

Niagara Region is working to reduce barriers experienced by members of the Indigenous community. Working together with local community agencies helps determine which services best meet the needs of an individual. It also helps to ensure the services are culturally appropriate.

## Culturally Aware Parenting Program

In 2024, Niagara Region Public Health collaborated with FENFC and NRNC to offer the **Triple P Parenting Program**. The program was adapted to combine positive parenting skills with traditional knowledge and culturally safe practices. Each location offered two six-week sessions.

## Supporting Indigenous Health and Wellbeing

Niagara Region recognizes the importance of supporting the whole person, including their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and community wellbeing.

In 2024, Niagara Region Public Health partnered with FENFC and NRNC to provide monthly

produce markets. These markets offered fresh fruits and vegetables at a reduced cost. Last year, the program partnered with **GROW Community Food Literacy Centre**. They provided a mobile market service that enables community members to consistently access a variety of healthy foods.

Niagara Region Public Health has partnered with FENFC and **REACH Niagara** to address the lack of health and well-being services in the area. Since 2023, this partnership has been offering weekly access to health services through the **Mobile Health Unit**. Niagara Region Public Health partnered with various Indigenous organizations to provide on-site community vaccination clinics. These clinics improve access and reduce barriers.

In 2025, Niagara Region Public Health created an **Indigenous Health Advisory Circle**. This group of community members meets monthly to guide Public Health priorities. Their shared experiences help improve the work at the Region.



In Memory, Niagara Regional Chair Jim Bradley was a strong supporter of the Indigenous communities in Niagara. Chair Bradley spoke at many of the community events lending his voice in sharing the true history of Turtle Island.

## Indigenous Voices in Planning and Decision Making

The voices of community matter. Listening to diverse Indigenous voices early in a project is important. We heard from more than 200 Indigenous voices while creating the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan.

The Indigenous Relations staff has worked with other Niagara Region staff to ensure Indigenous community voices are included when developing their programs and services. Recent examples of other Niagara Region strategic plans involving the Indigenous community include:

- Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Community Safety Well-Being Action Plan
- Supportive Housing Strategy
- Substance Use Prevention Strategy

For more information about these plans go to **niagararegion.ca**. Enter the plan name in the search bar.

## Future Priorities

In 2026, the Indigenous Truth and ReconciliAction Plan will be shared with Regional Council. Niagara Region will continue to connect with Indigenous leaders and community members. Employees will have access to new training and opportunities to attend cultural events. Community members will have chances to provide input on programs and services. There will be regular reporting with updates on how the Plan is progressing.

Niagara Region extends sincere thanks to Indigenous community members and partners for their guidance and collaboration in the work completed so far. We look forward to continuing this work together in a good way.

